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15 Passenger Van Driver Improvement Course

A “Crash Course” in
Safe Operation

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15 Passenger Van Driver Improvement Course

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Course Goal

This course is **not** intended to teach you how to drive a car. We're assuming you already have the skills necessary to operate a motor-vehicle.

The course is designed to help you understand the **inherent differences** between "standard" passenger vehicles and 15-Passenger Vans.

To operate a 15-Passenger Van... you **must understand and respect** these differences!



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Notice

Check with your organization for specific policies and procedures.

Follow all local, state and federal regulations.



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Upon Completion, You Should Be Able To...

Describe the functional differences between standard vehicles and 15-Passenger Vans.

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Upon Completion, You Should Be Able To...

Describe the functional differences between standard vehicles and 15-Passenger Vans.

Explain “Why” and “How” knowledge and awareness of risk can influence driver behavior.



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Upon Completion, You Should Be Able To...

Describe the functional differences between standard vehicles and 15-Passenger Vans.

Explain "Why" and "How" knowledge and awareness of risk can influence driver behavior.

Describe the stability effects of a fully-loaded 15-Passenger Van.

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Upon Completion, You Should Be Able To...

Describe the functional differences between standard vehicles and 15-Passenger Vans.

Explain “Why” and “How” knowledge and awareness of risk can influence driver behavior.

Describe the stability effects of a fully-loaded 15-Passenger Van.

Describe the use of “Reference Points” and how they can help you when parking.

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Upon Completion, You Should Be Able To...

Describe the functional differences between standard vehicles and 15-Passenger Vans.

Explain “Why” and “How” knowledge and awareness of risk can influence driver behavior.

Describe the stability effects of a fully-loaded 15-Passenger Van.

Describe the use of “Reference Points” and how they can help you when parking.

Identify important guidelines and procedures regarding traffic safety.

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Upon Completion, You Should Be Able To...

Describe the functional differences between standard vehicles and 15-Passenger Vans.

Explain “Why” and “How” knowledge and awareness of risk can influence driver behavior.

Describe the stability effects of a fully-loaded 15-Passenger Van.

Describe the use of “Reference Points” and how they can help you when parking.

Identify important guidelines and procedures regarding traffic safety.

Explain the requirements for pre-trip vehicle inspections and why we do them.

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Course Structure



- Classroom - 45 minutes
- Assessment - 15 minutes
- Driving

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Benefits of Course Completion

- No-wait van check out!
- Improve your driving skills!
- Give your passengers peace-of-mind
- Add certificate to resume

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Organizational Policy

Minimum Pre-Qualifications:

To be eligible to drive an institution-owned 15-Passenger Van, you must:

- Have a valid driver's license
- Have a reasonably good driving record

Your organization may perform a background check.

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Organizational Policy



- Physical modifications to vans
- Seat removal
- Passenger restrictions
- Accident reporting

Check with your organization for specific policies and restrictions.

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Safety Record



However... most people do not understand the **stability characteristics of these vehicles**. When responsibly operated, 15-Passenger vans have a good safety record...

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In the News - Sad... but true!

- **June 2000:** “Two Beijing Academy of Dance team members killed in cargo van rollover accident in Ritzville, WA.”
- **1999/2000:** “Six rollover accidents force NHTSA to initiate study.”
- **August 2000:** “Four members of the Prairie View A&M Track team killed in van rollover, seven others seriously wounded.”

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In the News - Sad... but true!

- **September 2000:** "Two killed in 15-passenger van rollover... Wisconsin Oshkosh Swim team."
- **2000:** "DePaul Women's Track team has van rollover accident."
- **2000:** "Tragedy strikes at Kenyon College – Women's Swim team involved in cargo rollover."

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Yeah, But It Won't Happen to Me!

- **September 2000:** "A group returning home from a field trip to Moses Lake, WA were injured in a 15-Passenger Van rollover accident. The van was driven by a university student counselor. The accident occurred when the student driver reached down to pick up a cellular phone."



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A Little Too Close to Home



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Statistical Information



Between 1994 and 1999, the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration conducted a study on the **"Rollover Propensity of 15-Passenger Vans."**

The results are described in the following slides.

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NHTSA Study (1994 - 1999)

Occupancy Level	All SV Crashes	All Rollovers	Rollover Ratios	Combined Rollover Ratios 1 to 9 and 10 or more occupants
Less than 5	1,815	224	12.3%	12.7%
5 to 9	77	16	20.8%	
10 to 15	55	16	29.1%	
Over 15	10	7	70.0%	35.4%

15-Passenger Vans have a much higher propensity to roll over during a crash when carrying more than 5 passengers!

Remember, adding cargo increases the chances of rolling as well!

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Why?



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Why?



Long, narrow wheel base

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Why?



High center
of gravity

Long, narrow wheel base

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Why?

Designed for high occupancy



High center
of gravity

Long, narrow wheel base

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Why?

Designed for high occupancy

Loaded heavy with cargo

High center
of gravity

Long, narrow wheel base

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Why?

Many passengers... many distractions



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Why?

Many passengers... many distractions



Ice/slush on road will “drag”
and “pull” the van

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Why?

Many passengers... many distractions

Driver is over the steering axle



Ice/slush on road will “drag”
and “pull” the van

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Why?

Many passengers... many distractions

Driver is over the steering axle

Size/shape makes the vehicle unpredictable in the wind

Ice/slush on road will “drag” and “pull” the van



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Things to Consider



With the combined weight of the occupants, cargo and the height center of gravity – 15-Passenger Vans are extremely vulnerable to rollovers during otherwise **minor** accidents.

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Things to Consider

A van loaded with
15 passengers is
6 times more likely
to roll over.



With the combined weight of the occupants, cargo and the height center of gravity – 15-Passenger Vans are extremely vulnerable to rollovers during otherwise **minor** accidents.

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Things to Consider

A van loaded with
15 passengers is
6 times more likely
to roll over.

15-Passenger Van
chassis are **very**
different than
standard vehicles.



With the combined weight of the occupants, cargo and the height center of gravity – 15-Passenger Vans are extremely vulnerable to rollovers during otherwise **minor** accidents.

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What Are The Differences?



Take longer to stop

Minor miscues are compounded in these vans.

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What Are The Differences?



Take longer to stop

Tend to hydroplane in wet weather conditions

Minor miscues are compounded in these vans.

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What Are The Differences?



Take longer to stop

Tend to hydroplane in wet weather conditions

Are affected by the wind much more than standard passenger vehicles.

Minor miscues are compounded in these vans.

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What Are The Differences?



Take longer to stop

Tend to hydroplane in wet weather conditions

Are affected by the wind much more than standard passenger vehicles.

The weight, height, occupant load and cargo load create a combined center of gravity that makes the overall vehicle prone to stop/corner sluggishly.

Minor miscues are compounded in these vans.

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Differences... Continued:



Decreased visibility
optical illusion



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Differences... Continued



Decreased visibility
optical illusion

Reference points are
different

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Differences... Continued



Decreased visibility
optical illusion

Reference points are
different

Conditional means of shifting
stability and vehicle weighting.

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Differences... Continued:



Decreased visibility
optical illusion

Reference points are
different

Conditional means of shifting
stability and vehicle weighting.

Distractions: Often, 15-Passenger Vans are loaded with young children who may be loud and rambunctious. Given that recovery times are diminished... minor distractions and loss of focus can be fatal.

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Differences... Continued:



Decreased visibility
optical illusion

Reference points are
different

Conditional means of shifting
stability and vehicle weighting.

Distractions: Often, 15-Passenger Vans are loaded with young children who may be loud and rambunctious. Given that recovery times are diminished... minor distractions and loss of focus can be fatal.

Corrective action is difficult in cargo vans.

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"Combined" Center of Gravity



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“Combined” Center of Gravity



The **red** line represents the plane in which the center of gravity of a van loaded with 5 or less occupants floats. The **blue** line shows where the “combined center-of-gravity” is when fully loaded.

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Reasons For Visual Misconception



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Reasons For Visual Misconception

The length of vehicle is a change for most drivers.



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Reasons For Visual Misconception

The length of vehicle is a change for most drivers.

The driver sits up higher.



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Reasons For Visual Misconception



The length of vehicle is a change for most drivers.

The driver sits up higher.

The driver sits almost directly over the front axle.

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Reasons For Visual Misconception

A white 15-passenger van is parked on a city street. The van has a sliding side door and several windows. In the background, there are buildings and trees.

The length of vehicle is a change for most drivers.

The driver sits up higher.

The distance between the rear axle and the real bumper limits visibility.

The driver sits almost directly over the front axle.

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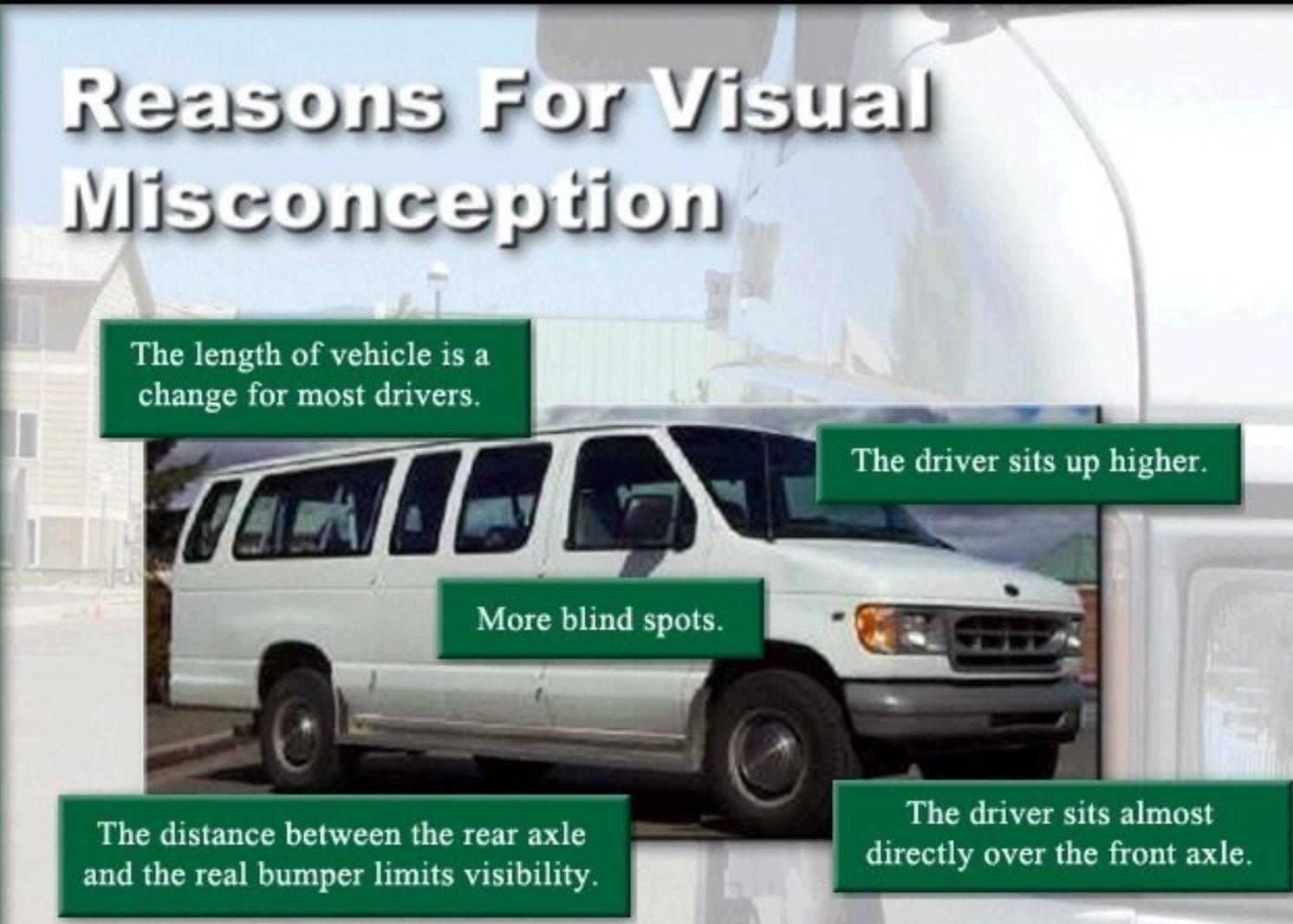
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Reasons For Visual Misconception



The length of vehicle is a change for most drivers.

The driver sits up higher.

More blind spots.

The distance between the rear axle and the real bumper limits visibility.

The driver sits almost directly over the front axle.

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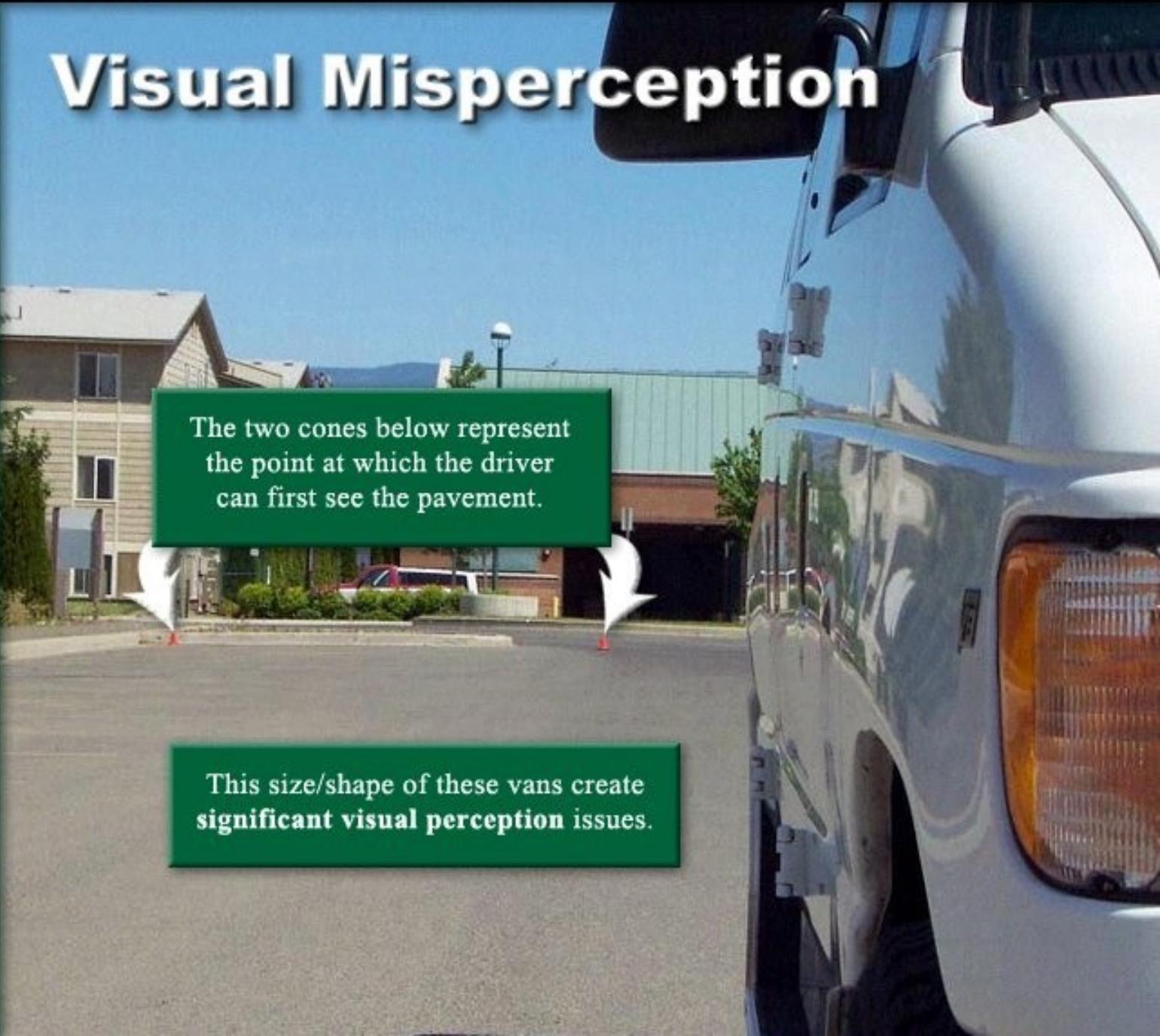
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Visual Misperception

A photograph of a large white van parked on a paved surface. The van's front-left corner is visible, showing its headlight and side mirror. In the background, there are buildings, trees, and a clear blue sky.

The two cones below represent the point at which the driver can first see the pavement.

This size/shape of these vans create significant visual perception issues.

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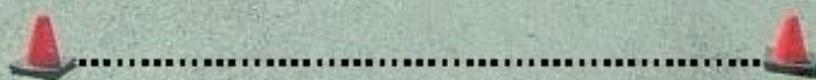
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Visual Misperception



It may not look like it in this photo, but these cones are actually several feet away. The next slide shows the same scenario:



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Visual Misperception



The cones to the front of the vehicle represent the point at which the driver can first see the roadway, curb or other potential obstruction.

Hopefully you can appreciate the value of using reference points.

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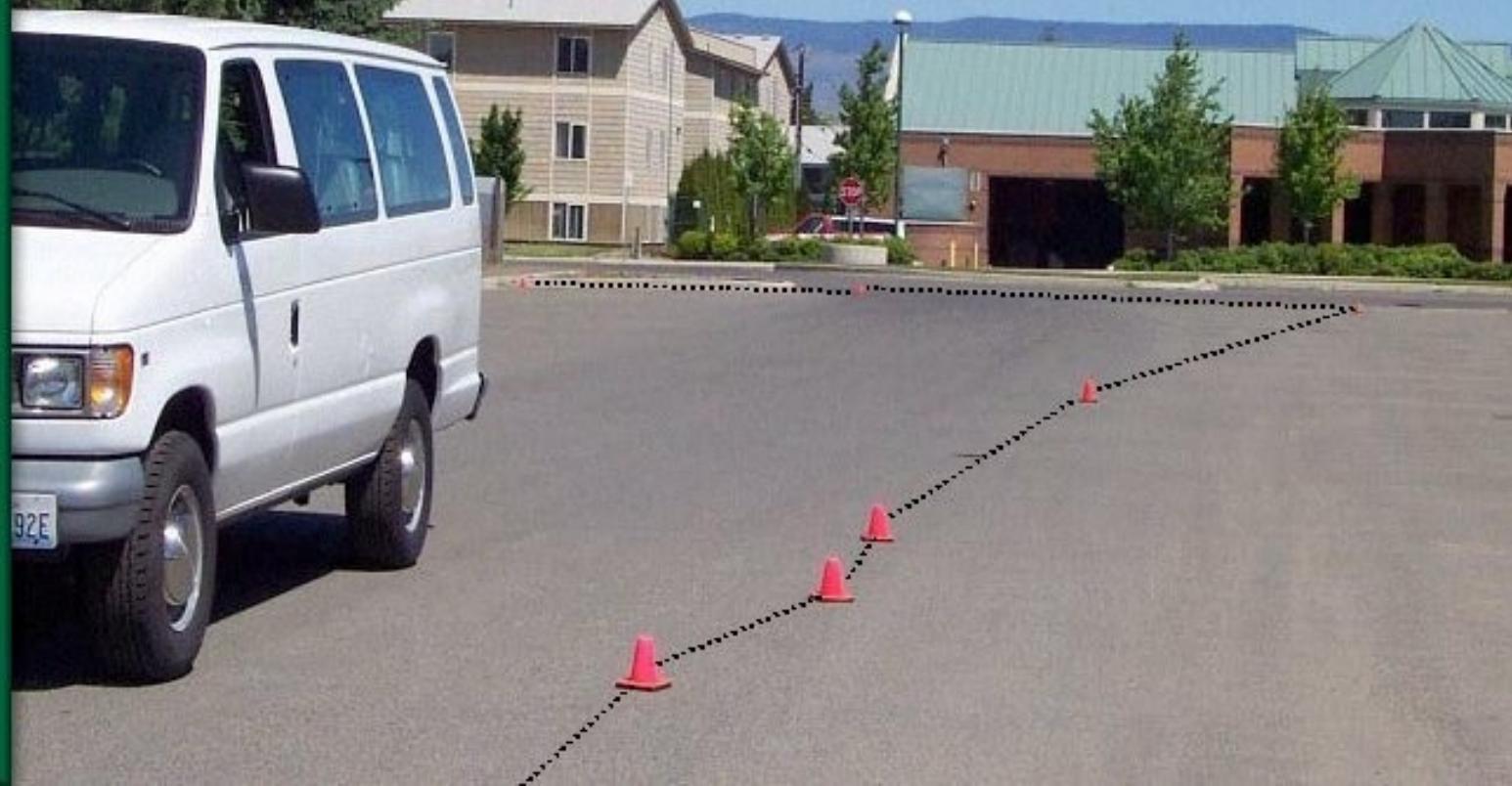
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Visual Misperception

The cones around the vehicle enclose the area of roadway that the driver cannot see.



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Reference Points



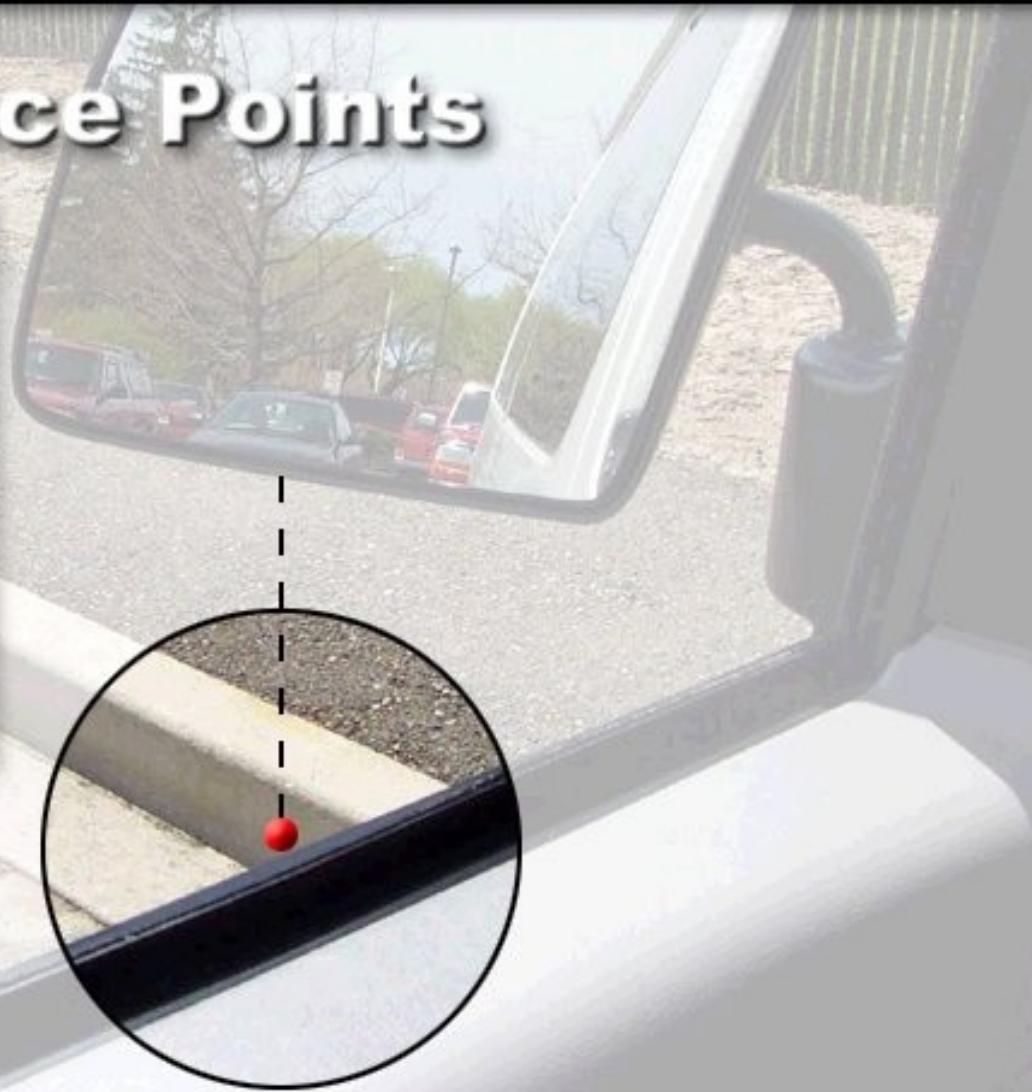
Reference points are **visual landmarks** located on various parts of the interior of the vehicle. The driver uses these **fixed points** on the **inside** of the vehicle to provide **reference** to where the **outside** of the vehicle is.

Follow along to see how:

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Reference Points

This is an example of a **Driver's Side** reference point. By identifying and applying this particular point of reference, the driver can easily park the vehicle without causing front-end damage.



The following slide shows the same van parked from the outside:

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Reference Points

A photograph showing the front right corner of a white van parked on a paved curb. In the background, there's a residential area with houses, trees, and a stop sign. A white arrow points from the text box to the van's front bumper.

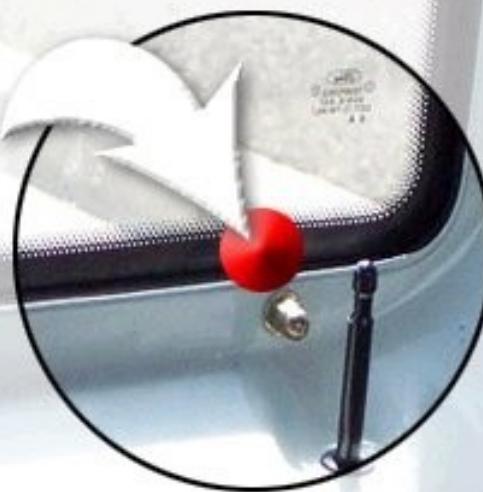
Notice that the front bumper is in line with the curb

Without using the driver's side reference point, this would be next to impossible. The theory of using reference points works all around your vehicle.

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Reference Points

Looking over his right shoulder, the driver uses this point on the passenger's side (referencing it to the **face of the curb**), to back his vehicle into a parking space.



The next slide shows the same vehicle from the outside:

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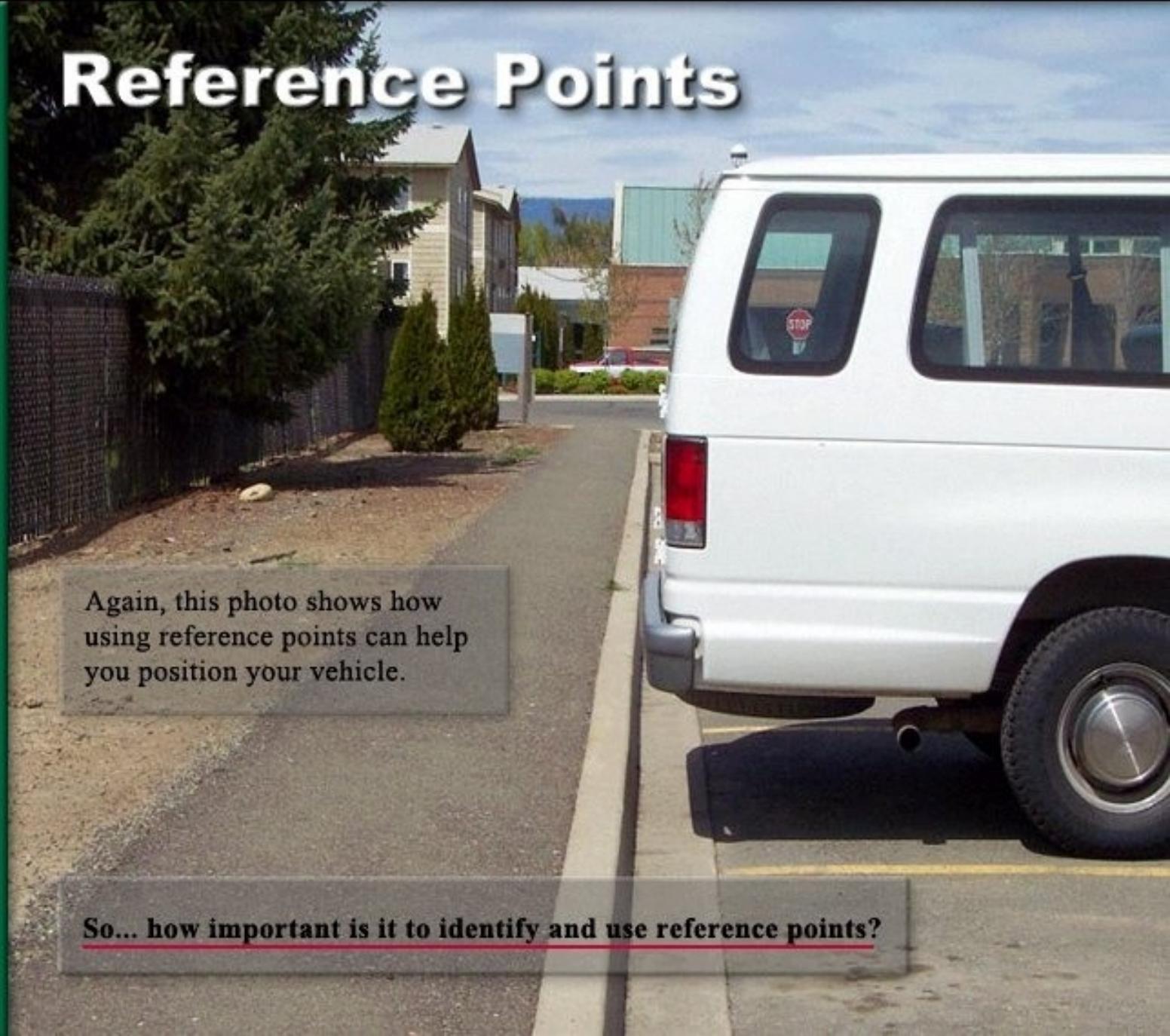
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Reference Points



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Understanding and Managing Risk

- Understanding simply means **knowing** your vehicle.
- With **understanding** comes **acknowledgement**.
- **Knowing** and **acknowledging** allows you to **anticipate**.
- To effectively **manage risk** – you must **understand**, **acknowledge** and **anticipate** dangerous situations. If you commit yourself to look for developing situations... **you can avoid them!**

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Time & Space Management



- Managing time and space means separating yourself from potentially hazardous conditions.
- Create a buffer between you and other motorists, pedestrians and road hazards.

Always leave yourself a way out. You have to be consistent!

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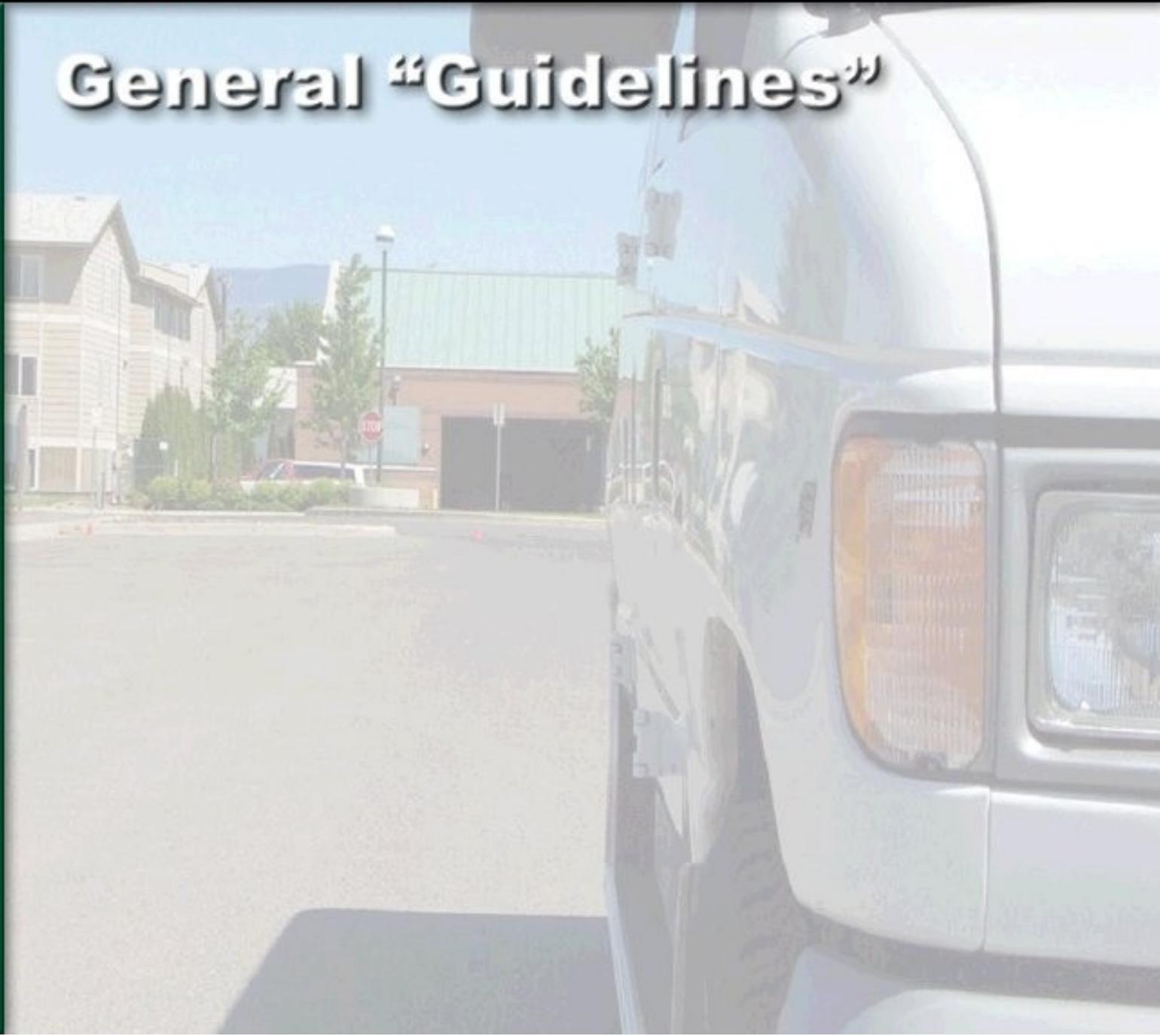
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General “Guidelines”



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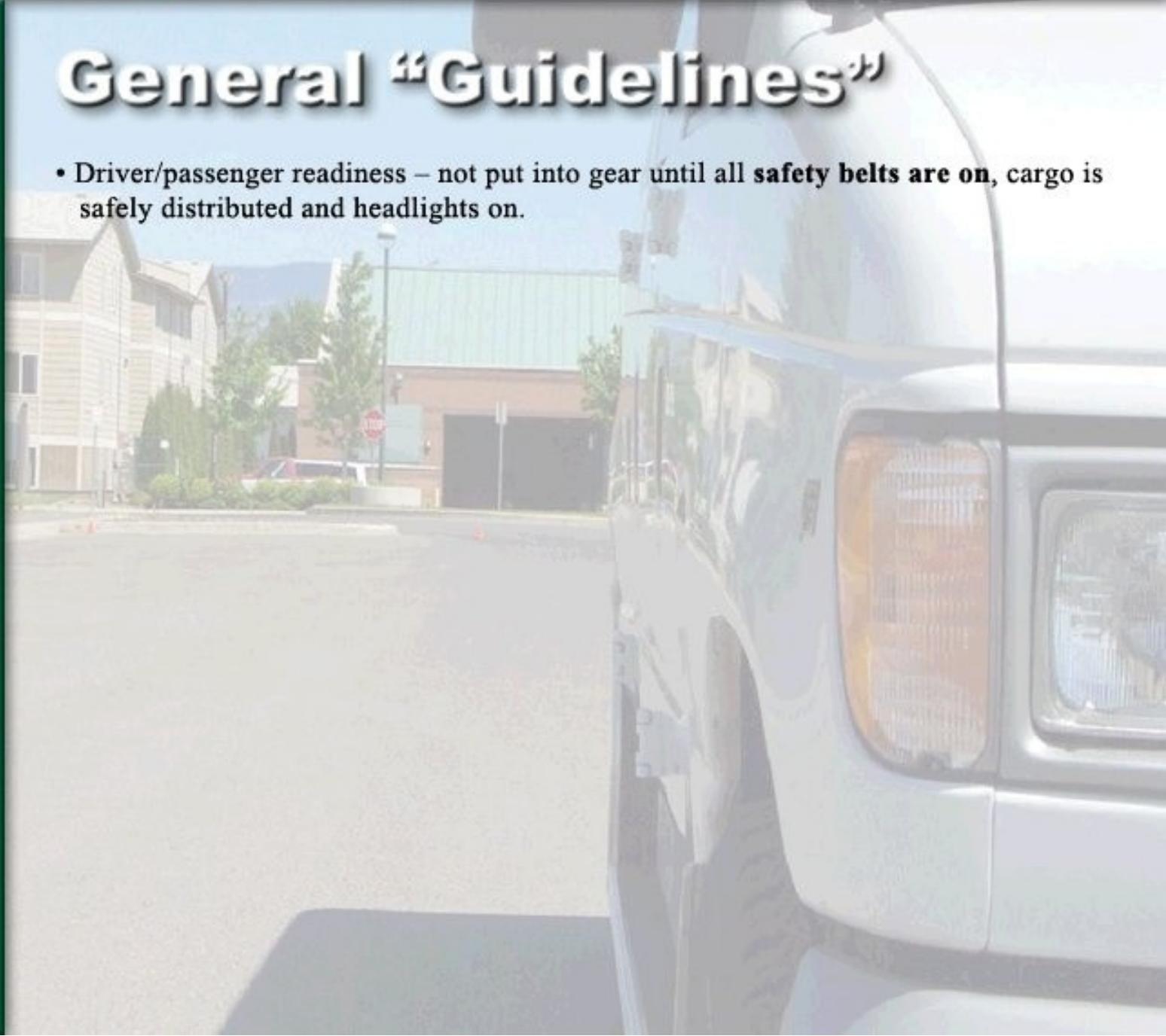
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General “Guidelines”

- Driver/passenger readiness – not put into gear until all **safety belts are on**, cargo is safely distributed and headlights on.



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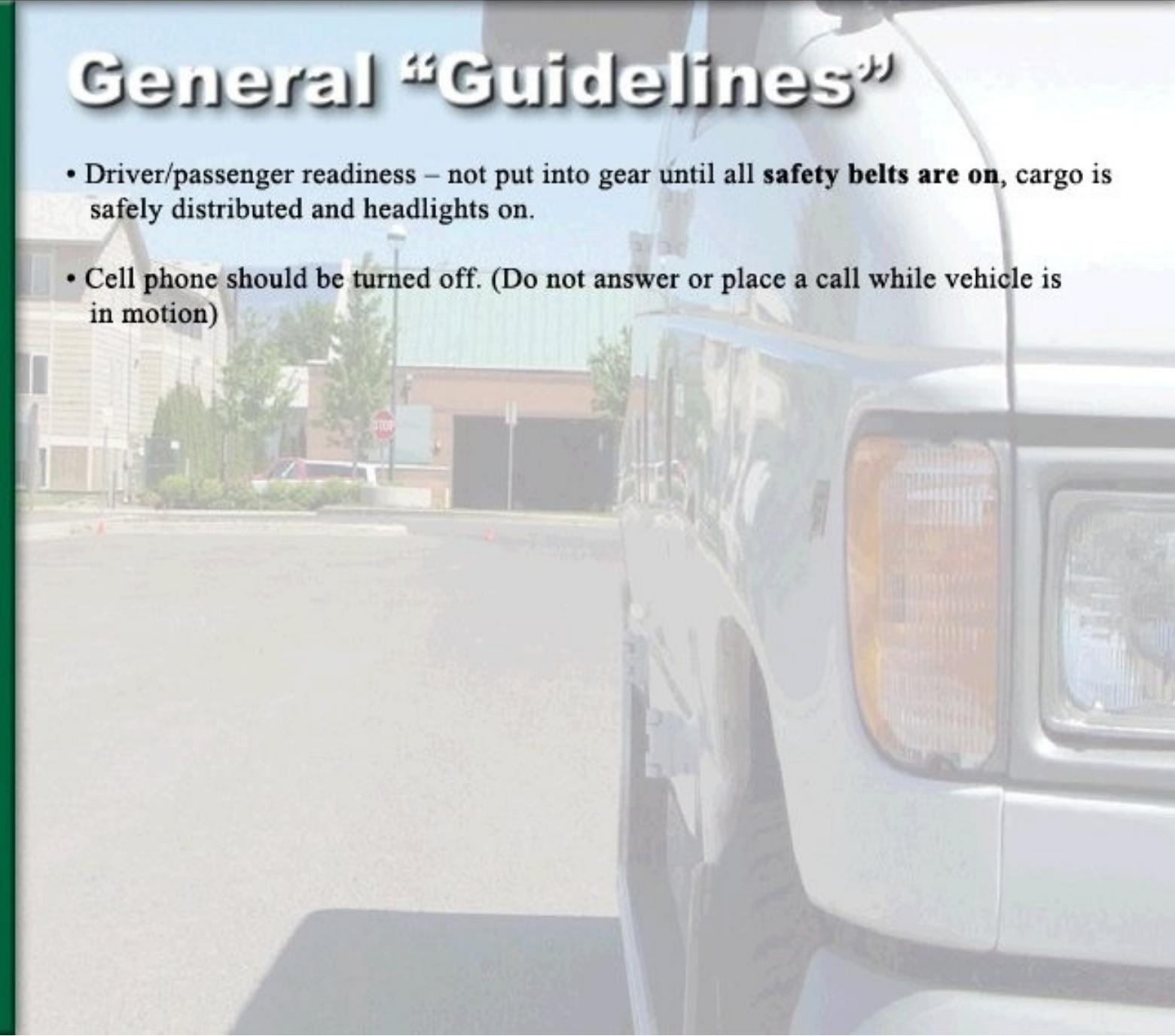
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General “Guidelines”

- Driver/passenger readiness – not put into gear until all **safety belts are on**, cargo is safely distributed and headlights on.
- Cell phone should be turned off. (Do not answer or place a call while vehicle is in motion)



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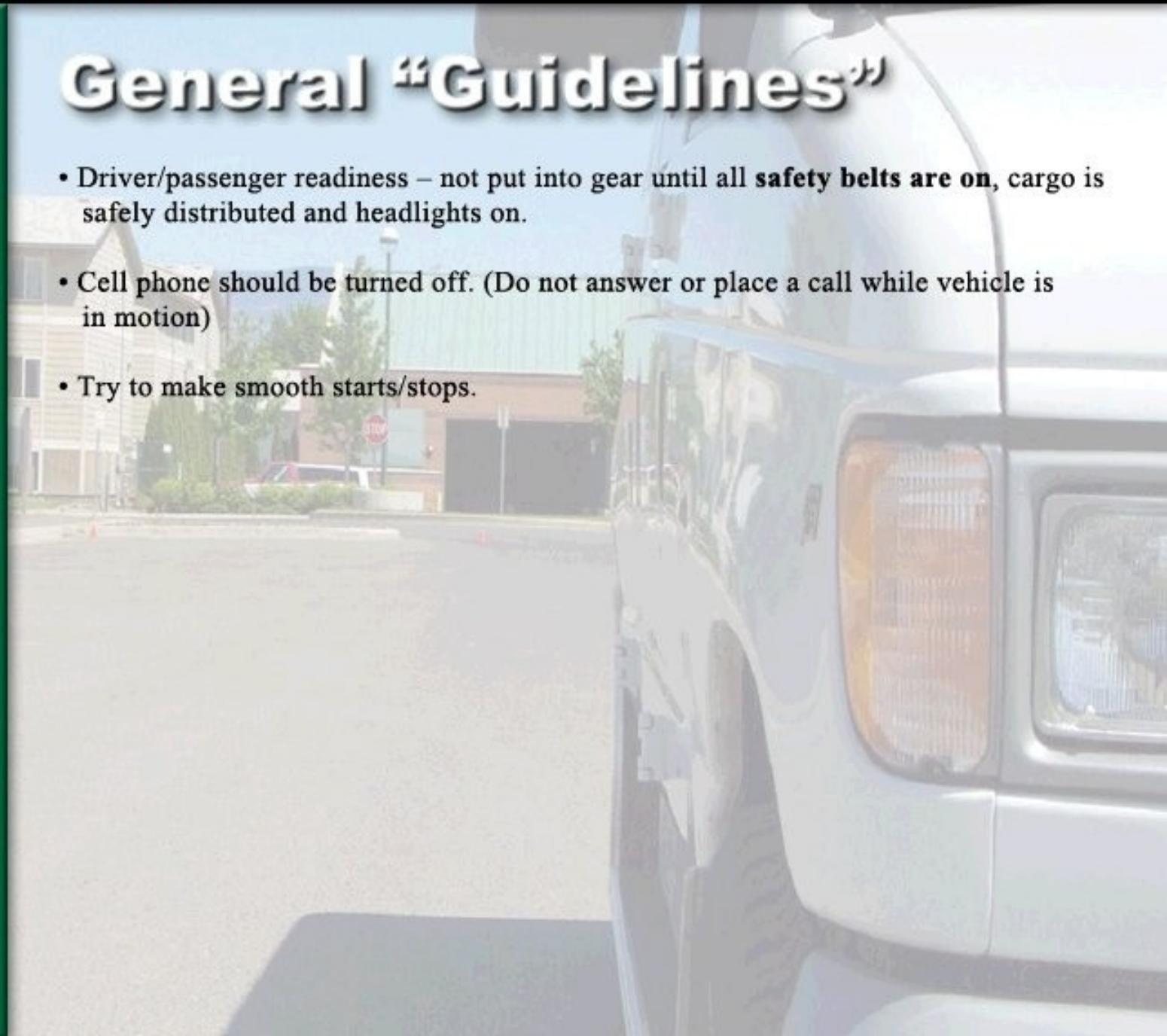
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General “Guidelines”

- Driver/passenger readiness – not put into gear until all **safety belts are on**, cargo is safely distributed and headlights on.
- Cell phone should be turned off. (Do not answer or place a call while vehicle is in motion)
- Try to make smooth starts/stops.



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General “Guidelines” Continued

- Use your reference points.



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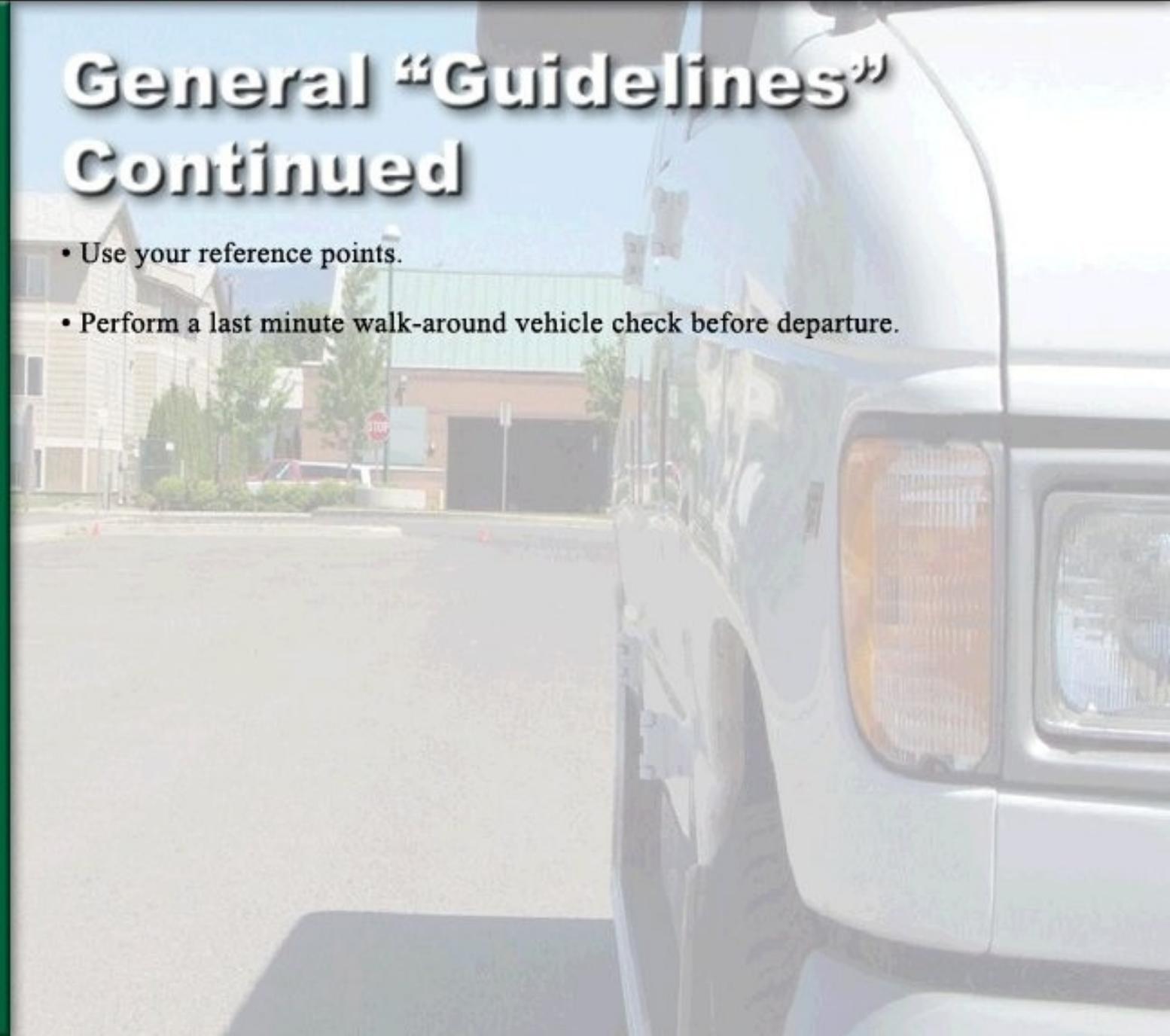
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General “Guidelines” Continued

- Use your reference points.
- Perform a last minute walk-around vehicle check before departure.



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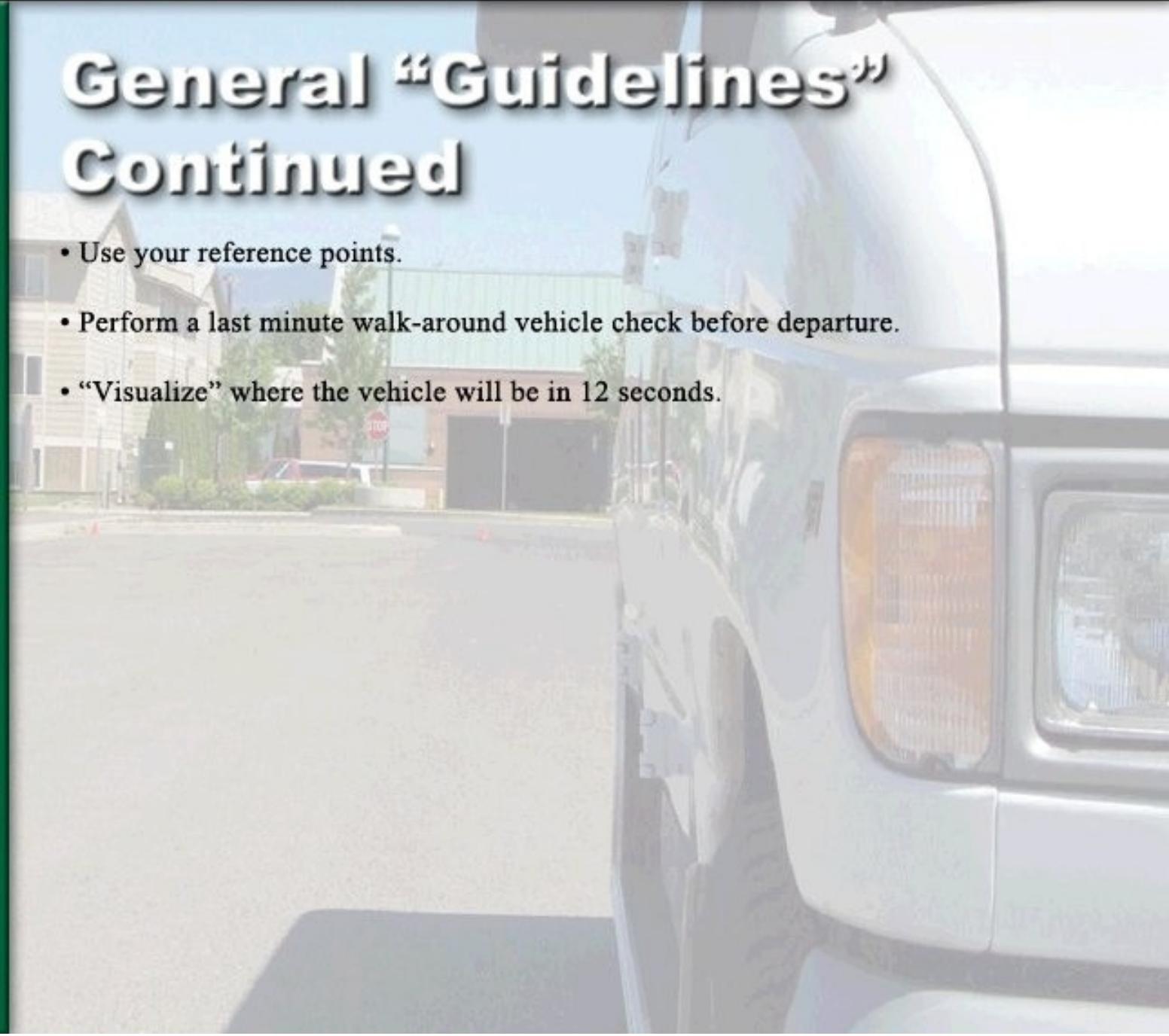
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General “Guidelines” Continued

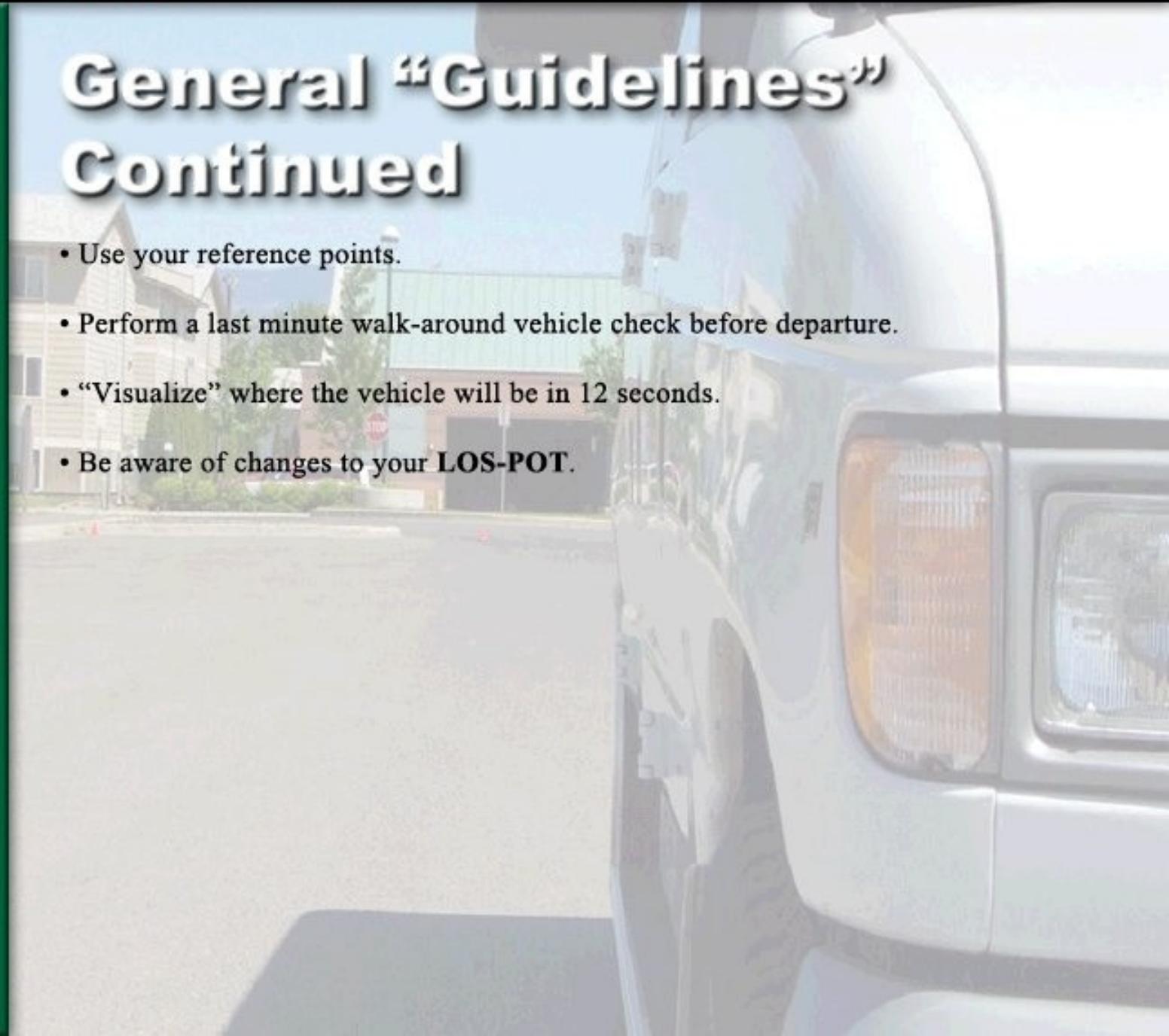
- Use your reference points.
- Perform a last minute walk-around vehicle check before departure.
- “Visualize” where the vehicle will be in 12 seconds.



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General “Guidelines” Continued

- Use your reference points.
- Perform a last minute walk-around vehicle check before departure.
- “Visualize” where the vehicle will be in 12 seconds.
- Be aware of changes to your **LOS-POT**.



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General “Guidelines” Continued

- Use your reference points.
- Perform a last minute walk-around vehicle check before departure.
- “Visualize” where the vehicle will be in 12 seconds.
- Be aware of changes to your **LOS-POT**.
- Reduce speed when **LOS-POT** is restricted.

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General “Guidelines” Continued

- Use your reference points.
- Perform a last minute walk-around vehicle check before departure.
- “Visualize” where the vehicle will be in 12 seconds.
- Be aware of changes to your **LOS-POT**.
- Reduce speed when **LOS-POT** is restricted.
- Maintain “empty” space to side.

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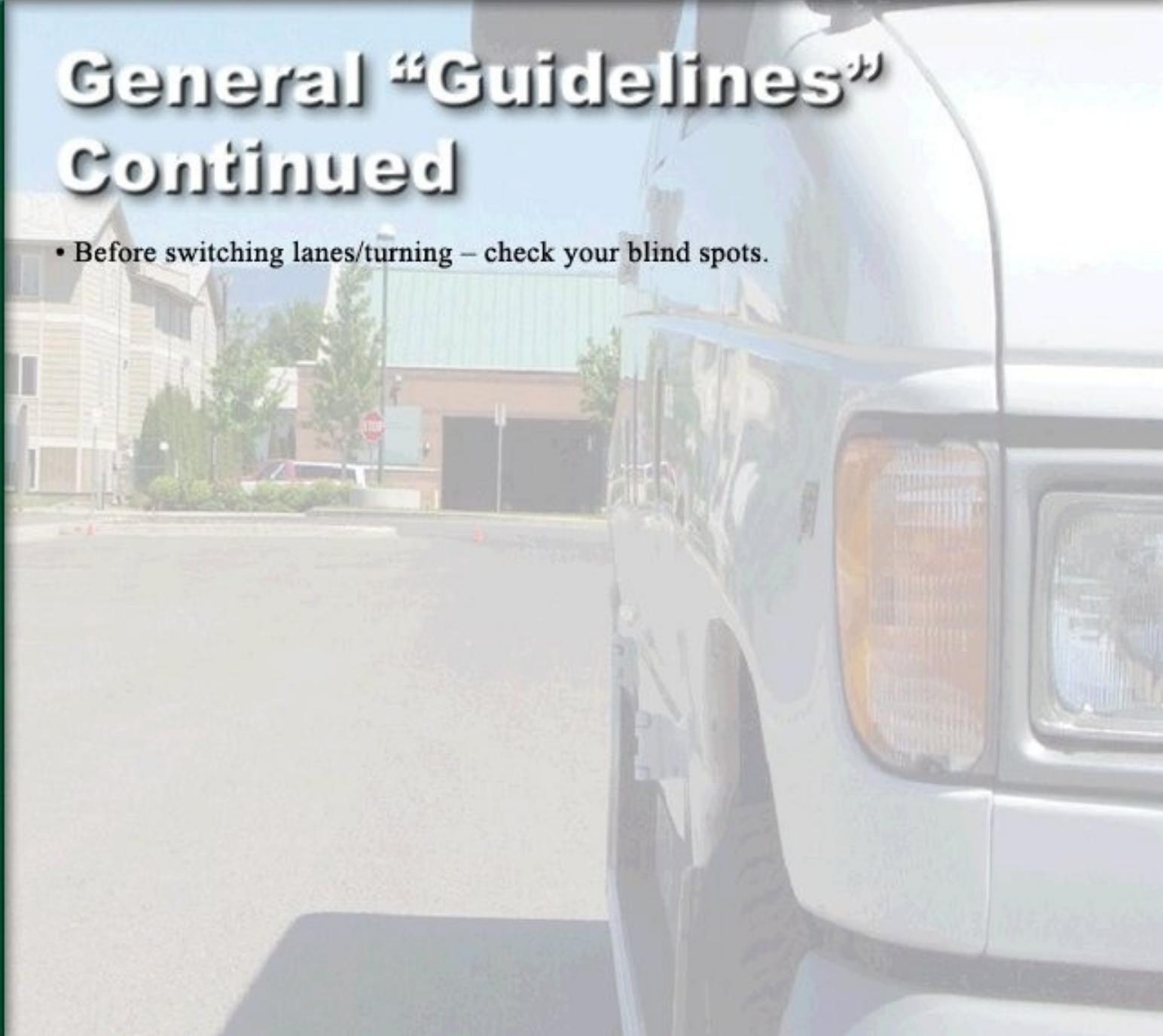
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General “Guidelines” Continued

- Before switching lanes/turning – check your blind spots.



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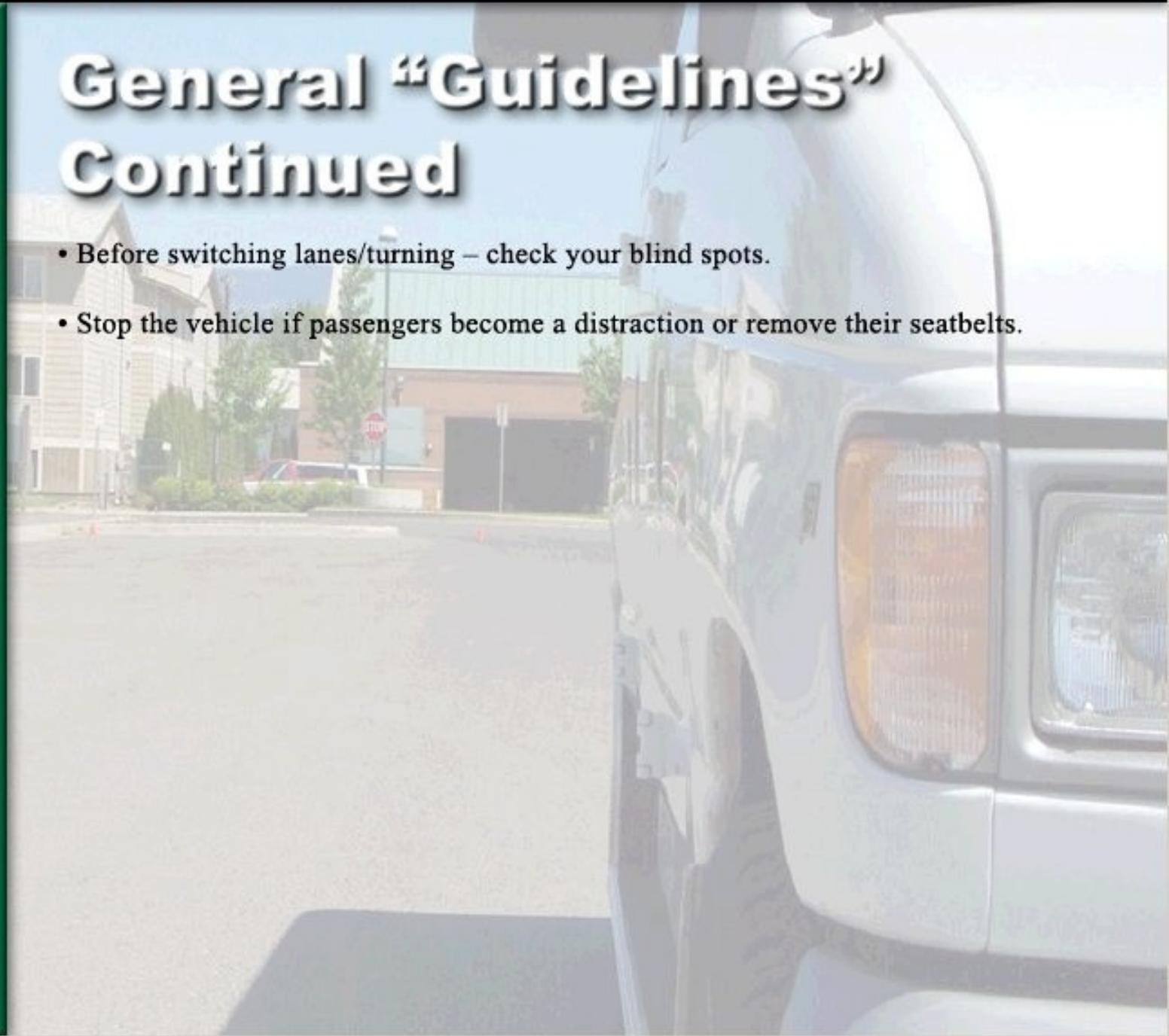
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General “Guidelines” Continued

- Before switching lanes/turning – check your blind spots.
- Stop the vehicle if passengers become a distraction or remove their seatbelts.



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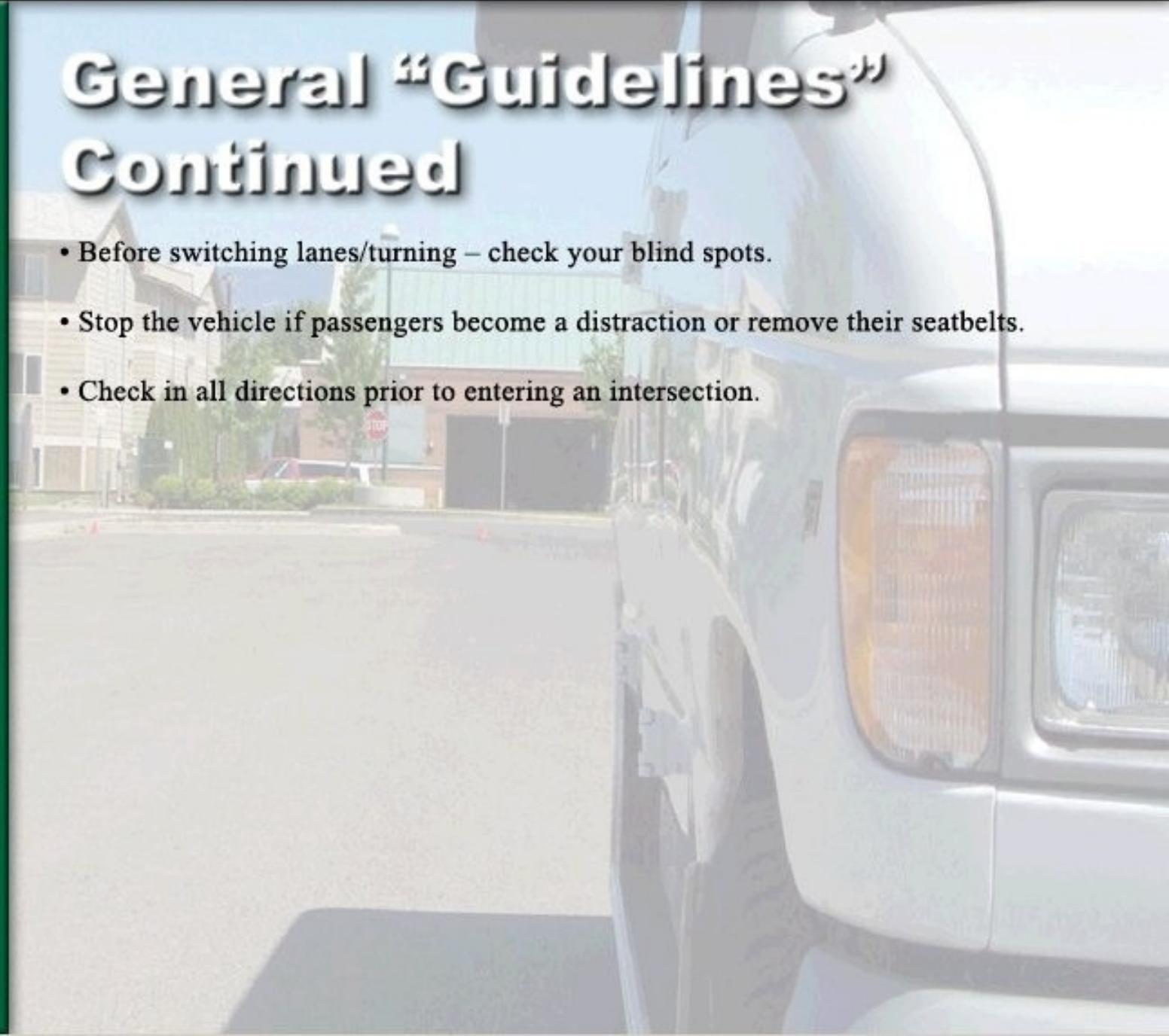
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General “Guidelines” Continued

- Before switching lanes/turning – check your blind spots.
- Stop the vehicle if passengers become a distraction or remove their seatbelts.
- Check in all directions prior to entering an intersection.



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General “Guidelines” Continued

- Before switching lanes/turning – check your blind spots.
- Stop the vehicle if passengers become a distraction or remove their seatbelts.
- Check in all directions prior to entering an intersection.
- Slow well in advance of yellow/red lights. (Time it so you reach at green)

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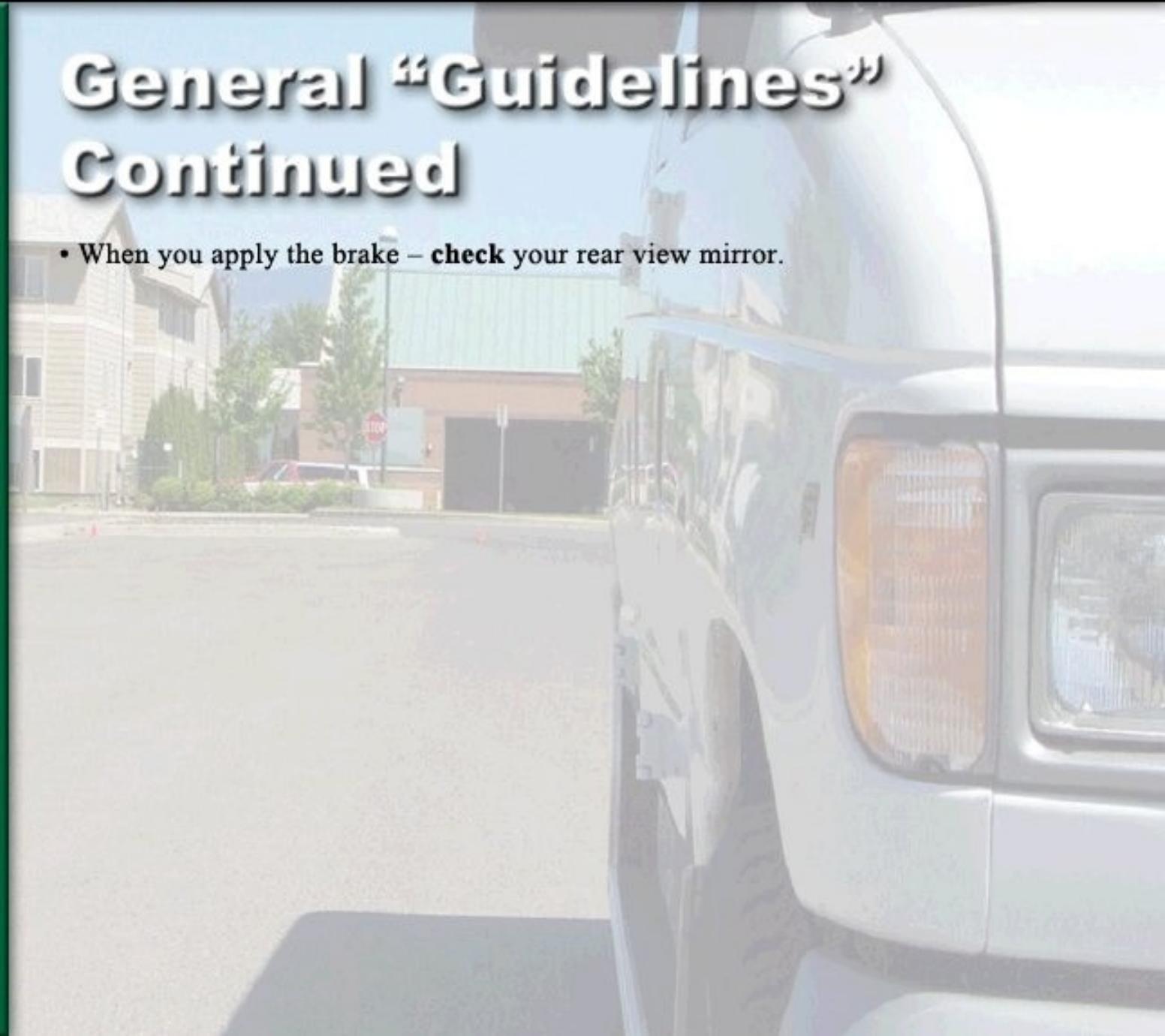
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General “Guidelines” Continued

- When you apply the brake – **check** your rear view mirror.



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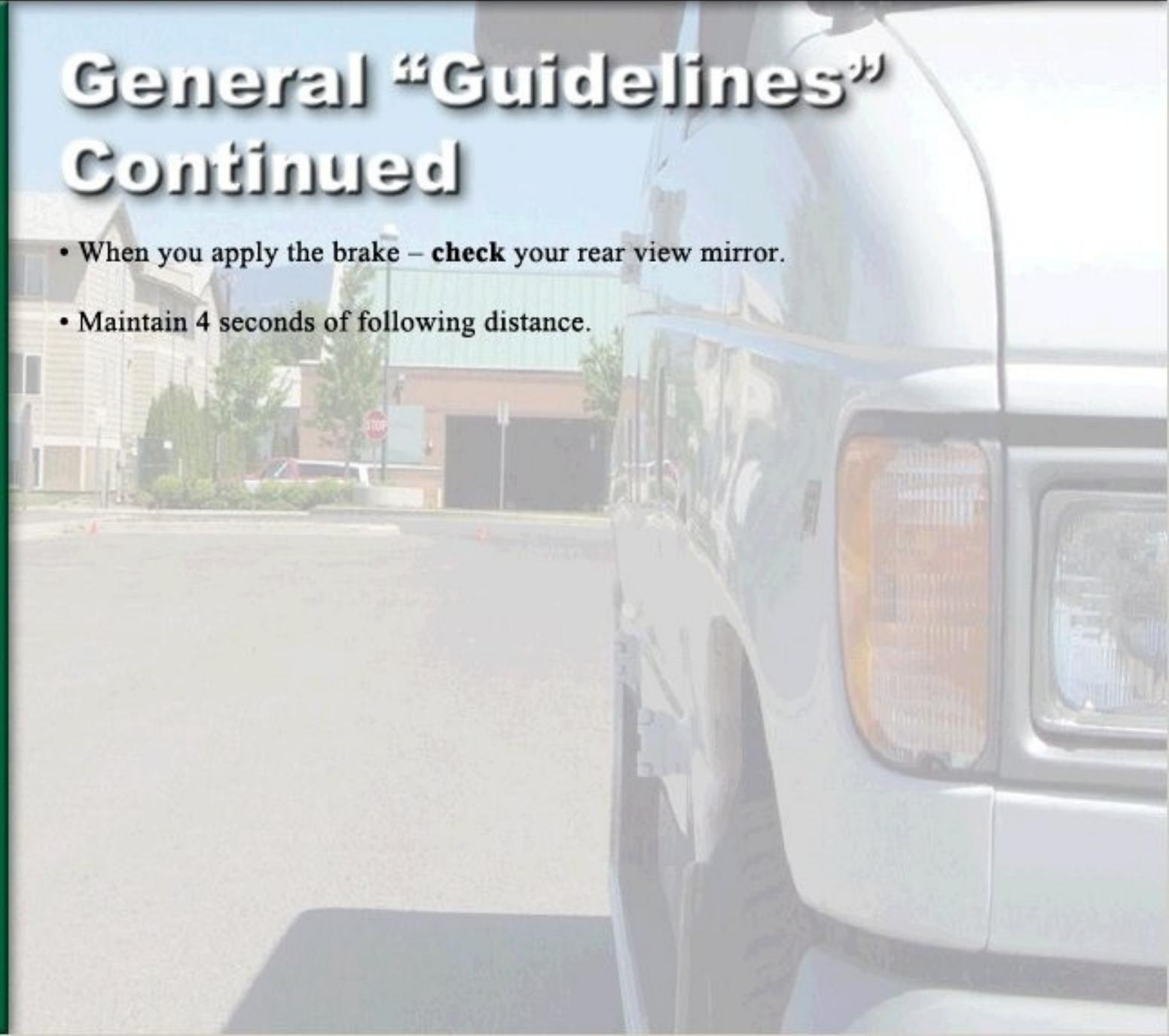
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General “Guidelines” Continued

- When you apply the brake – **check** your rear view mirror.
- Maintain 4 seconds of following distance.



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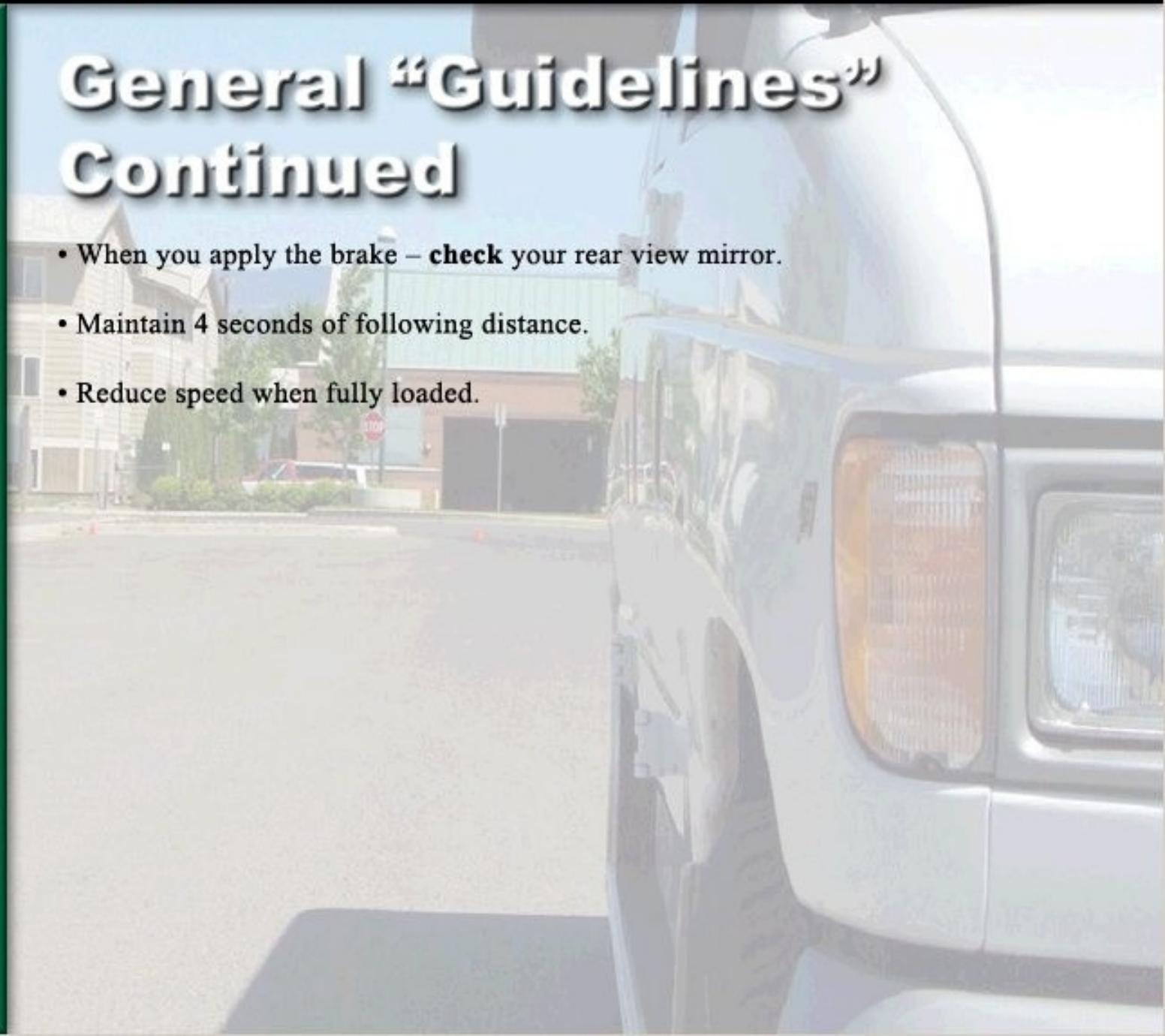
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General “Guidelines” Continued

- When you apply the brake – **check** your rear view mirror.
- Maintain 4 seconds of following distance.
- Reduce speed when fully loaded.



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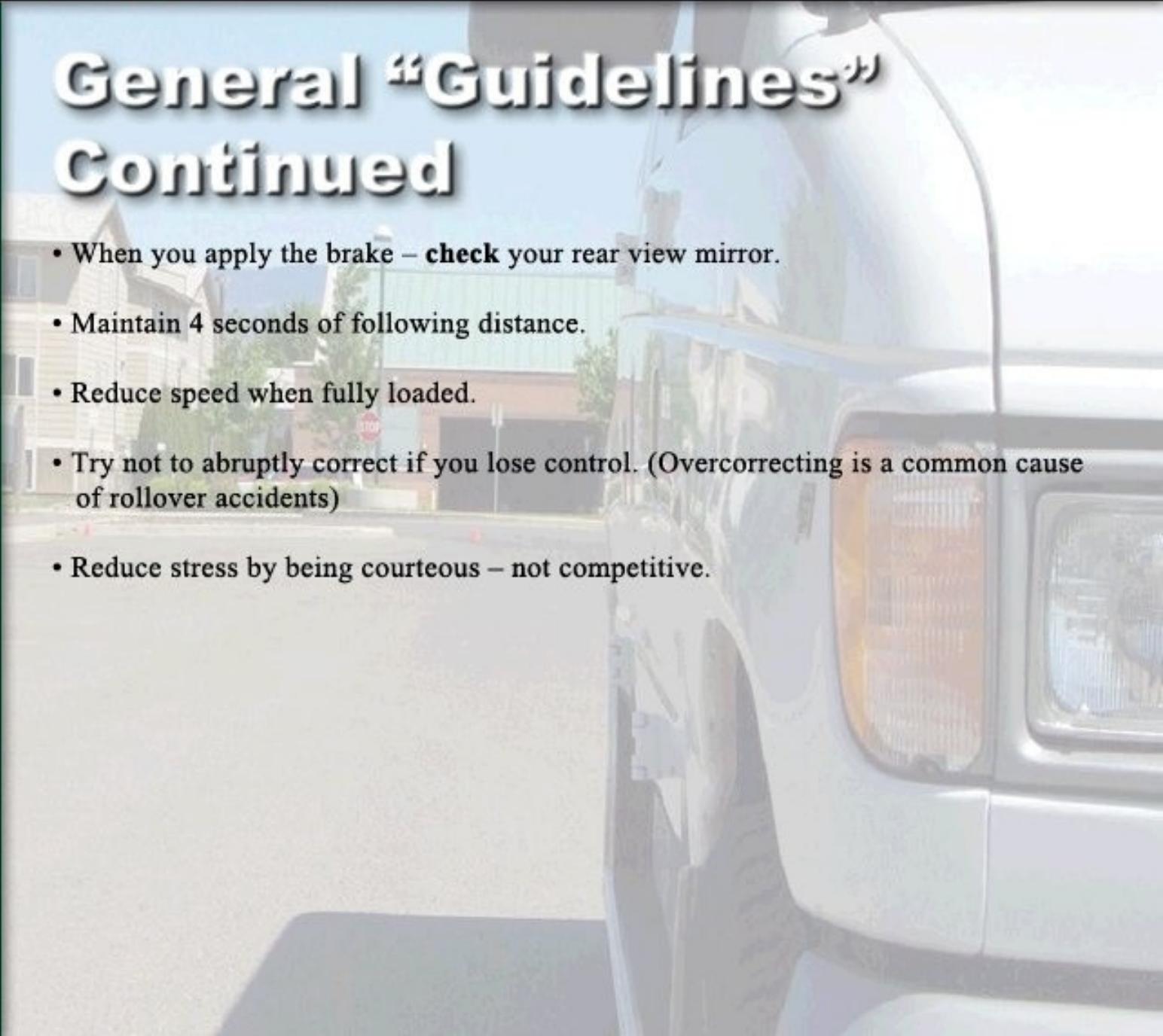
General “Guidelines” Continued

- When you apply the brake – **check** your rear view mirror.
- Maintain 4 seconds of following distance.
- Reduce speed when fully loaded.
- Try not to abruptly correct if you lose control. (Overcorrecting is a common cause of rollover accidents)

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General “Guidelines” Continued

- When you apply the brake – **check** your rear view mirror.
- Maintain 4 seconds of following distance.
- Reduce speed when fully loaded.
- Try not to abruptly correct if you lose control. (Overcorrecting is a common cause of rollover accidents)
- Reduce stress by being courteous – not competitive.



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Loading Your Vehicle



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Loading Your Vehicle



- **Distribute passengers and cargo evenly.**

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Loading Your Vehicle



- **Distribute passengers and cargo evenly.**
- **Secure all loose items.**

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Loading Your Vehicle



- **Distribute passengers and cargo evenly.**
- **Secure all loose items.**
- **Get assistance when handling heavy belongings.**

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Loading Your Vehicle



- **Distribute** passengers and cargo evenly.
- **Secure** all loose items.
- **Get assistance** when handling heavy belongings.
- **Ensure** that your passengers are seated and belted in.

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Loading Your Vehicle



- **Distribute** passengers and cargo evenly.
- **Secure all** loose items.
- **Get assistance** when handling heavy belongings.
- **Ensure** that your passengers are seated and belted in.
- **Avoid** carrying cargo on roof-top racks.

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Pre-Operation Inspections



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Pre-Operation Inspections

Check the overall condition and appearance of the vehicle.



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Pre-Operation Inspections

Check the overall condition and appearance of the vehicle.



Visually inspect all four tires for loose lug nuts and punctures/ gouges.



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Pre-Operation Inspections

Check the overall condition and appearance of the vehicle.



Visually inspect all four tires for loose lug nuts and punctures/ gouges.

Check tail lights, headlights, signals and wipers.

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Pre-Operation Inspections

Check the overall condition and appearance of the vehicle.



Visually inspect all four tires for loose lug nuts and punctures/ gouges.

Check tail lights, headlights, signals and wipers.

Check operation of brakes, steering and horn.

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Pre-Operation Inspections

Check the overall condition and appearance of the vehicle.



Visually inspect all four tires for loose lug nuts and punctures/ gouges.

Check tail lights, headlights, signals and wipers.

Check operation of brakes, steering and horn.

Ensure seatbelts are fastened, cargo is safely distributed and that your passengers are familiar with the general rules.

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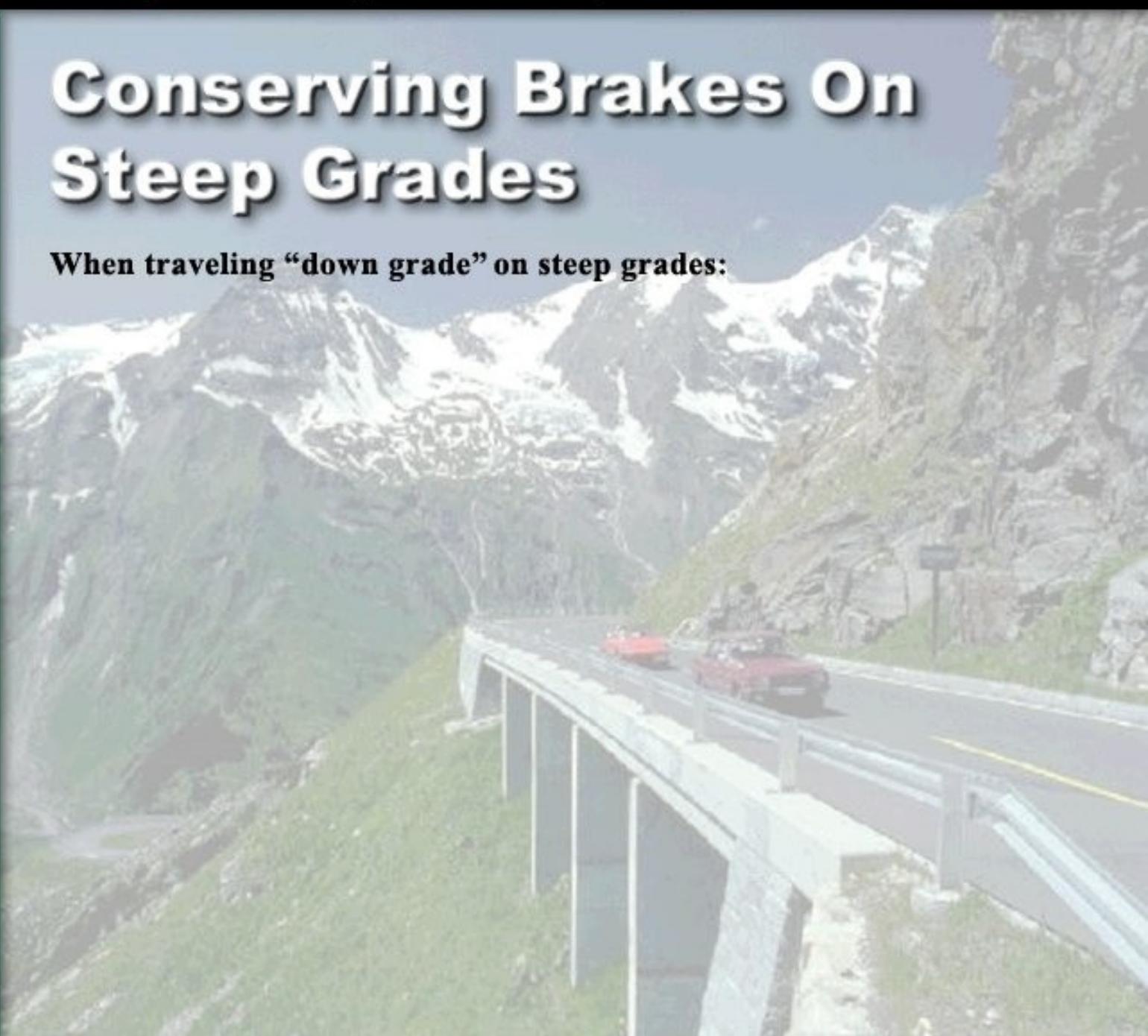
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Conserving Brakes On Steep Grades

When traveling “down grade” on steep grades:



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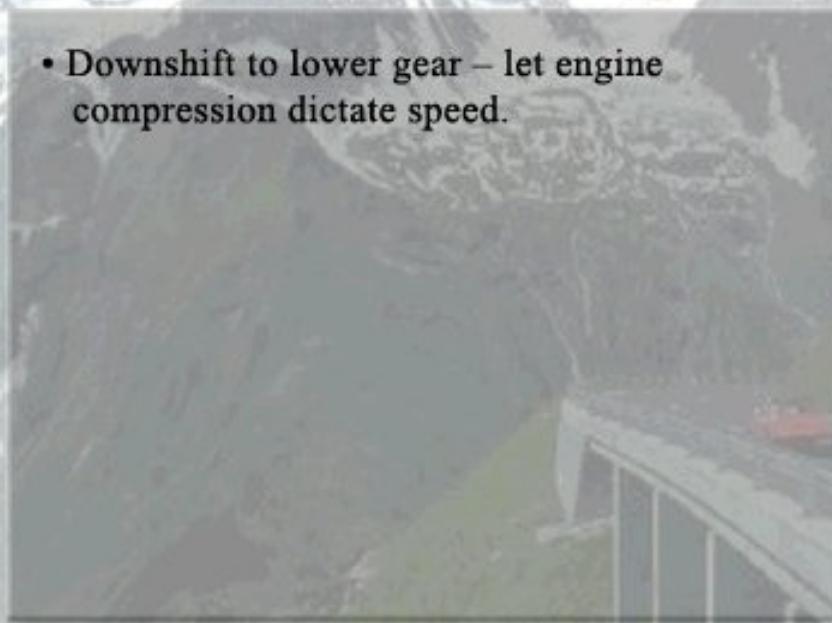
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Conserving Brakes On Steep Grades

When traveling “down grade” on steep grades:

- Downshift to lower gear – let engine compression dictate speed.



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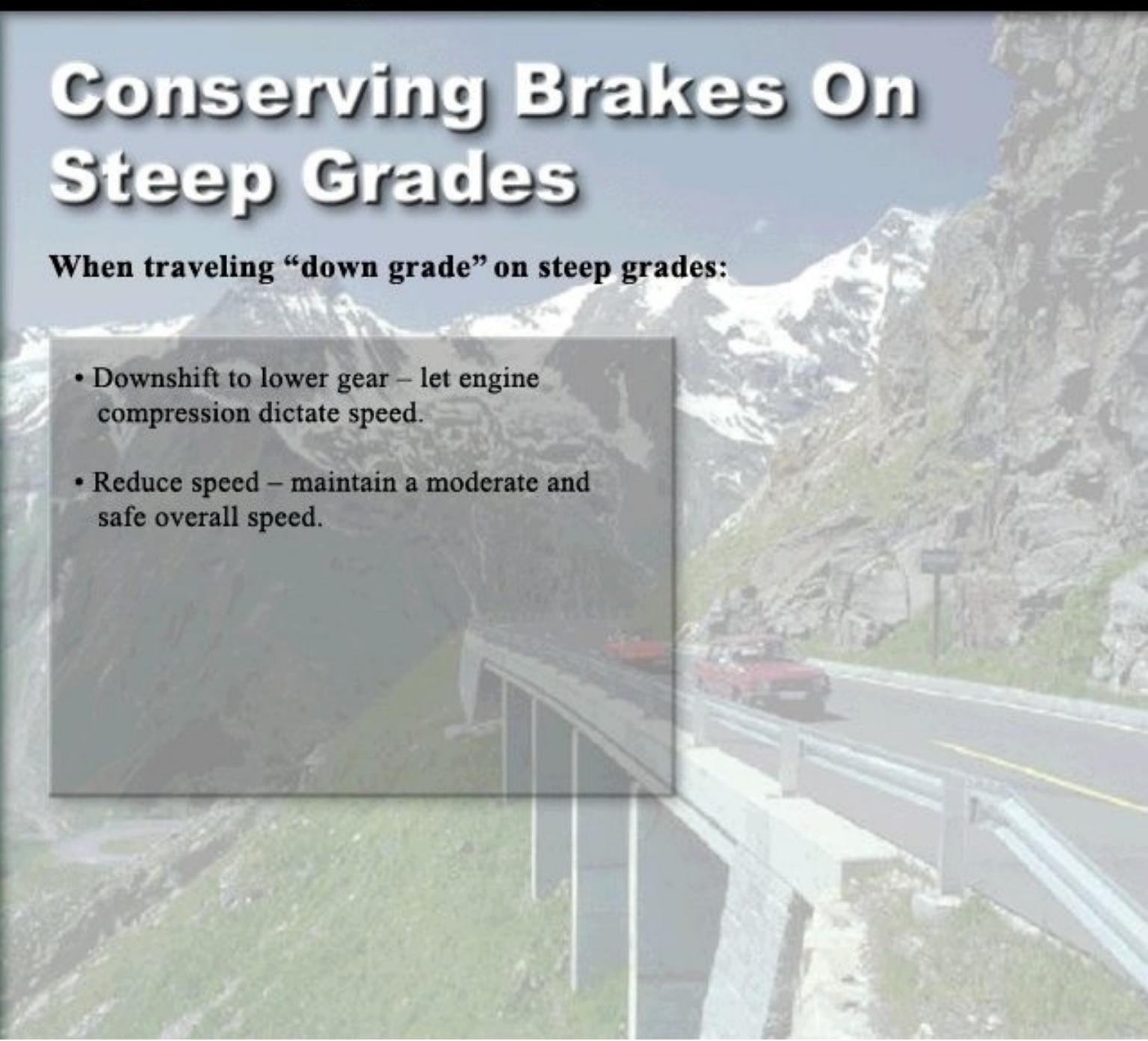


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Conserving Brakes On Steep Grades

When traveling “down grade” on steep grades:

- Downshift to lower gear – let engine compression dictate speed.
- Reduce speed – maintain a moderate and safe overall speed.



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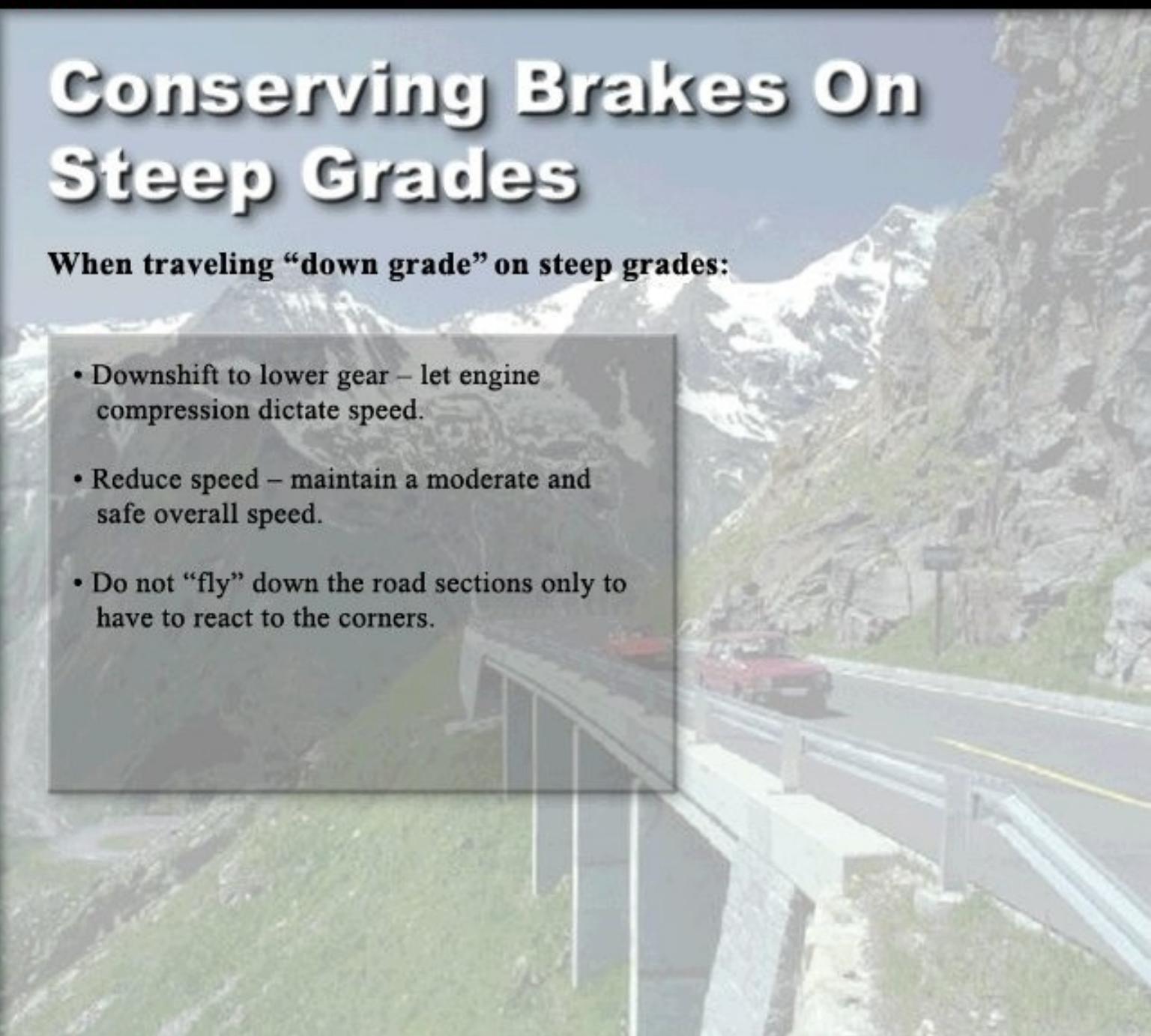
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Conserving Brakes On Steep Grades

When traveling “down grade” on steep grades:

- Downshift to lower gear – let engine compression dictate speed.
- Reduce speed – maintain a moderate and safe overall speed.
- Do not “fly” down the road sections only to have to react to the corners.

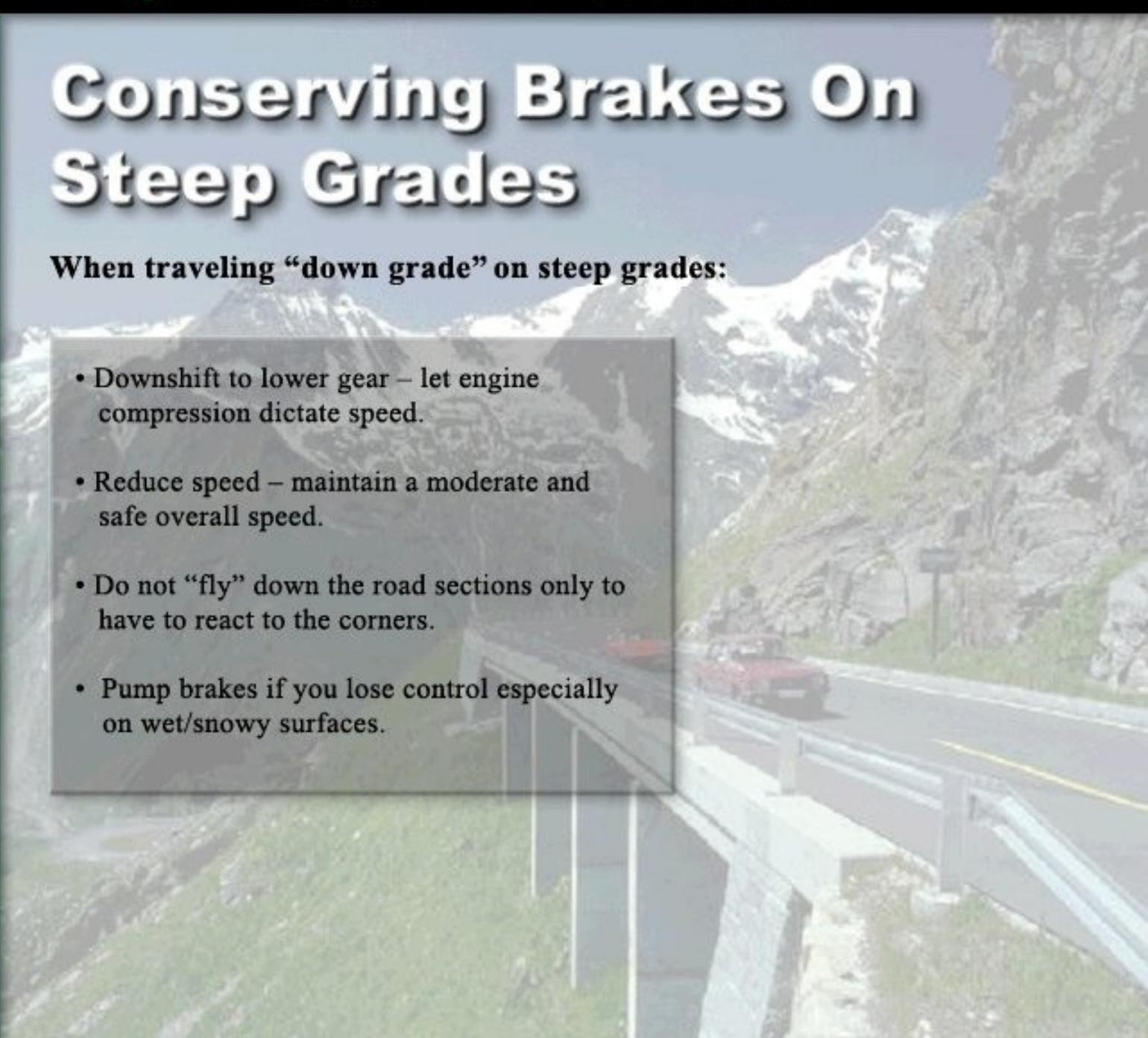


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Conserving Brakes On Steep Grades

When traveling “down grade” on steep grades:

- Downshift to lower gear – let engine compression dictate speed.
- Reduce speed – maintain a moderate and safe overall speed.
- Do not “fly” down the road sections only to have to react to the corners.
- Pump brakes if you lose control especially on wet/snowy surfaces.



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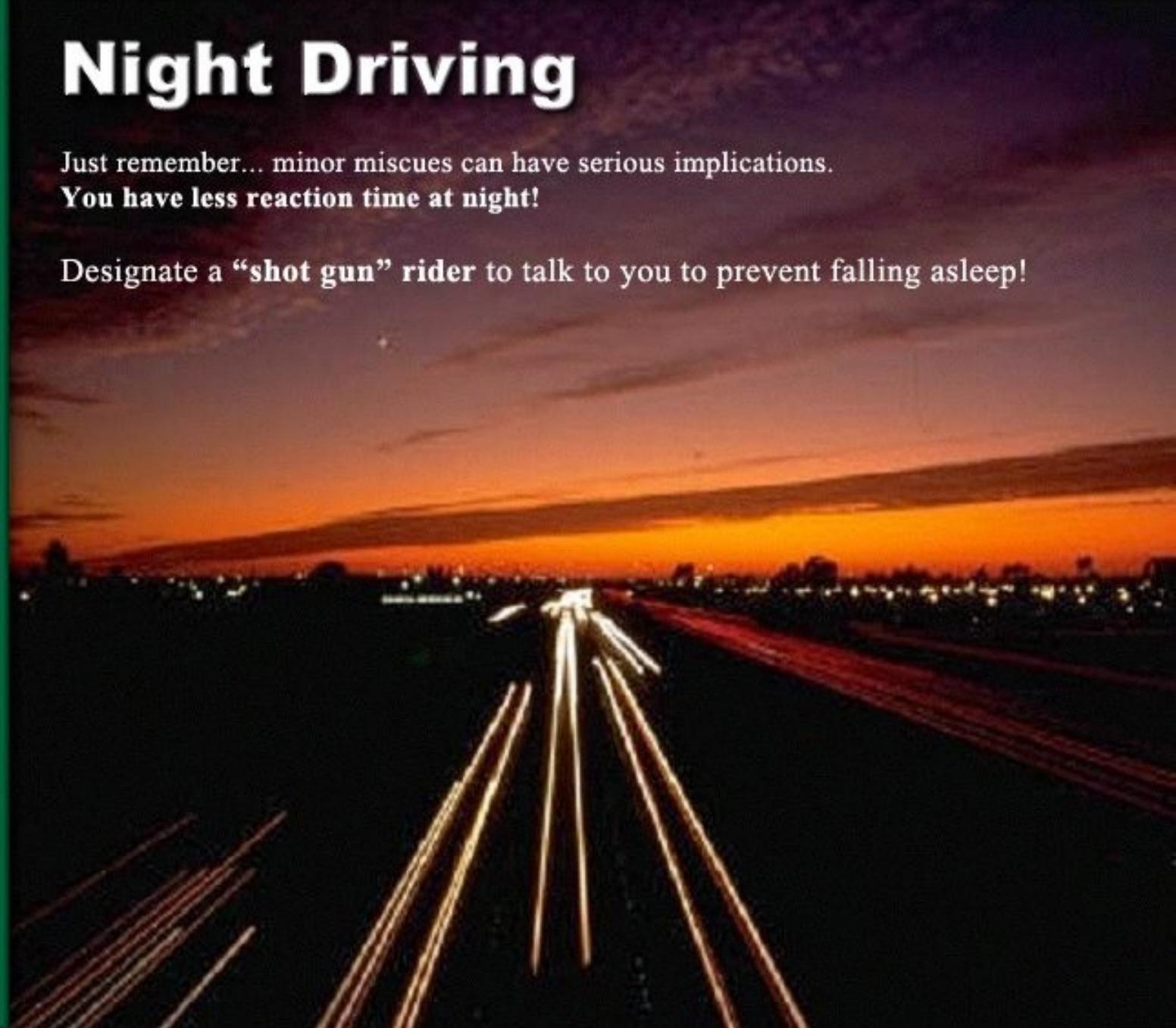


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Night Driving

Just remember... minor miscues can have serious implications.
You have less reaction time at night!

Designate a “shot gun” rider to talk to you to prevent falling asleep!



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Please
always
remember that you are transporting
“precious” cargo
and to take these driving
principles to heart.

You
must
personally take the responsibility
for the
safety
of your passengers!



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The WorkSafe Institute of Washington was established in 2000, and is a partnership of Central Washington University, Highline Community College and Skagit Valley College. The Institute was created through a contribution by Equilon Enterprises as a result of an accident that claimed the lives of six workers. The WorkSafe Institute is a legacy to those fallen workers.



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